Style, Grammar, and the Movies

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cinematic units as he pleases, often making up *ad hoc* principles of a narratological sort to differentiate units.

This is evident especially in Chapters 6 and 7 where Metz applies his system to a film text, *Adieu Phillipine* (1962) by Jacques Rozier. In addition to, and probably because of, its theoretical failings, Metz's *grande syntagmatique* proves to be quite troublesome in application. Any sort of experimentation in film, even narrative experimentation, creates an immediate gap, but there are also substantial problems even with conventional narrative. Critics in France have noted many discrepancies or misapplica-

tions in the *Adieu Phillipine* reading. Indeed, Metz's own text raises a large number of doubtful cases, regarding which GS category applies to a segment, or even more fundamentally, *how* the borders of "a segment" are to be determind in a particular case—since Metz's phenomenological base assumes that segments are given, i.e., that they come already identified in viewer experience of the film. As noted, he resolves these difficulties by appeals to various, utterly heterogeneous principles and criteria. Gödel says that every system generates contradictions at its higher levels; Metz's system generates a large number of conflicts even at its first level.

BILL NICHOLS

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Let's begin with a slogan and orientation: "A film is stylistic before it is grammatical." The ramifications of this simple assertion are what I want to examine. In due course it should become apparent that virtually all semiologically and structurally flavored writing on the cinema is founded upon incorrect assertions and false epistomology, that the privileged model for film theory cannot be the linguistics of verbal language and that, ironically, film critics usually dismissed for their Romantic aesthetics and conservative politics (like V. F. Perkins and Andrew Sarris) may be in a better position to provide the tools necessary for the development of a Marxist film theory and criticism than those openly leftist but ultimately formalist writers who have set the stage for so many of the recent controversies in film theory and criticism.

The ultimate goal of the orientation begun here is to bring about a merger of Freud and Marx—the personal and the political, the "language of the unconscious" and the structure of society—to link up visual/formal analysis with scientific, ideological analysis, to demonstrate, in fact, that the latter can and must be derived

from the former and *not* from the privileged model of verbal language.

Formal, visual analysis, in turn, has two large components—style and narrative—both being meeting places for the analog and digital,* moti-

*These two forms are basic to all natural systems of communication. Analog communication involves continuous quantities with no significant gaps. There is no "not" nor any question of "either/or"; everything is "more or less" (for example, all nonconventionalized gestures, inflections, rhythms, and the context of communication itself). Digital communication involves discrete elements and discontinuities or gaps. It allows for saying "not" and "either/or" rather than "both/and" (as in all denotative, linguistic communication). In nature, the digital is the instrument of the analog (it is of a lower logical type and higher order of organization). In our culture the instrumental relationship is reversed. The two forms are not in opposition and the general function of the digital is to draw boundaries within the analog—as with the on/off switch of a thermostat operating within a temperature continuum, or phonemes arbitrarily carved from a sound continuum. On a broader level we might redefine the emergence of culture from nature as the "introduction of *digital communication and exchange*."[1]

vated and unmotivated sign systems, semiology broadly conceived and semiology as a branch of linguistics. We can no more hope to attain conceptual adequacy by resting our theories upon the latter set of categories than we can explain the motion of the planets by saying they revolve around the earth. Film is fundamentally and irreducibly a fusion of two basic modes of communication (the analog and the digital) and while I may overemphasize the former to help right the balance, they can no more be separated or opposed than the hydrogen and oxygen that make up water—without destroying the compound!

Gregory Bateson has provided us with a description of a schizophrenogenic episode that can be taken as a paradigm for interactions that include the analog and digital into one multi-leveled unit of communication:

"BATESON'S PARADIGM"

A young man who had fairly well recovered from an acute schizophrenic episode was visited in the hospital by his mother. He was glad to see her and impulsively put his arm around her shoulders, whereupon she stiffened. He withdrew his arm and she asked, "Don't you love me any more?" He then blushed, and she said, "Dear, you must not be so easily embarrassed and afraid of your feelings." The patient was able to stay with her only a few minutes more and following her departure he assaulted an aide and was put in the tubs.[2]

We will have more to say about this encounter later, but the point stressed by Bateson is that the young man lacks the tools to escape a double bind created by a communicational context. The inability to discriminate between communicational levels, or logical types (see below, and note 36) and to deal with the paradoxes they generate is symptomatic of schizophrenia. It also characterizes much recent film theory. There is no need to conclude the syllogism, for it is patently false, and yet the film theorist too gains from his blindness: he escapes the terror that lurks in epistemological upheaval. Film theorists socialized in a society valorizing the digital (for highly ideological purposes—namely exploitation in all its forms), in fact, as intellectuals often serve as high priests in that valorizing process even when presumably opposing present social values; they choose to suppress the errors of their epistemology rather than to fly to others they know not of. One result of this failure to understand communication has been idealist, schematic analyses (sometimes posing as meta-communication) with a flashy appearance—a kind of intellectual chrome-trim stuck on, in which methodology substitutes for performance.[3]

The slogan I began with derives from an essay by Pier Paolo Pasolini in which he argues that film lies closer to poetry than prose, that it can only be flattened onto the Procrustean bed of prose logic (grammar) by willful suppression of basic features unaccounted for by a linguistic model.[4] Cinema's instrumental base is of an irrational type, like dreams and memories (the functions of Freud's unconscious, primary process) since its basis lies with images. Like dreams the film image lacks tenses, it operates by metaphor without labels for the metaphor itself (such as the word "like,") and it lacks the word "not" which allows us to create the boundaries of digital communication—classically oppositions of the sort "A/not A." Furthermore, images are always motivated signs, bearing a relationship of similarity to their referent (of which Bazin made much) although, as some semiologists, especially Umberto Eco, have stressed, the reading of images must always be learned.[5]

Motivated signs are unlike verbal language, which has an instrumental base of a rational, arbitrary sort—the phonemes. Whereas we recognize the distinction between "pig" and "big" by the arbitrary, unmotivated difference between "p" and "b" (this in fact being the commutation test so important to linguistics), we distinguish between an image of a woman and an image of a man by non-arbitrary, motivated differences that have their analog in the referents—the visual image formed on the retina during everyday perception.[6]

As a consequence, there can be no double articulation in film: the standarized units of an arbitrary code are absent. Instead of arbitrary units (phonemes) with "nonsense" gaps (noise) that can be coupled to produce second-order units economically (26 letters yielding an infinity of words) with a grammar to govern the process

of coupling of these units (monemes) to yield syntagms, cinema has no alphabet of phonemes. It has no dictionary of monemes. Instead it has a continuum of images which it frames and punctuates with gaps (cuts, dissolves, fades, etc.) that are constantly shifting, with units that are limitless and with syntagms (or, in Eco's terminology, semes) that are subject to no determinate grammar or code. We cannot construct an ungrammatical sequence as we can write a nonsense sentence—unconventional perhaps but not ungrammatical. Pasolini argues that unlike the writer, the film-maker

> must first draw the im-sign (or image for Metz, icon for Eco) from chaos, make it possible and consider it classified in a dictionary of im-signs (gestures, environment, dreams, memory); he must then accomplish the very work of the writer, that is, enrich this purely morphological im-sign with his personal expression. While the writer's work is esthetic invention, that of the film-maker is first linguistic invention, then esthetic.[7]

Film can only be spoken in ideolects. Metz is right; there is no *langage,* but there is no *langue* either, only conventions.[8] To suppress this crucial distinction and hold out for a *langue,* to argue that there are in fact cinematic codes[9] or a code subject to linguistic operations and grammatical constraints, as Metz has done with his *Grande Syntagmatique* for narrative construction, demands of the theorist that he locate discrete arbitrary units as a foundation for his code. Metz has tried to do this with the image, treating it as an instrumental base capable of constituting a denotative level—his *Grande Syntagmatique* —but only at the price of denying the image's expressive nature.[10]

Pasolini denies articulations to cinema. Eco, as we'll see, tries to locate them within the image and single shot (one image through time). Metz wants to locate them beyond the image in the construction of narrative. He seems on firm footing at first. Isn't montage clearly a method of articulation, exploding cinema's potential for expression infinitely? Isn't it the lynchpin that allows for the insertion of structural linguistics into film theory in order to elaborate a film grammar and elucidate film narrative? The answer is short, simple and final: while montage effects discontinuity in the moving image strip, the units, or signs, so constituted are in *no* sense arbitrary, unlike the instrumental base of language (phonemes). Hence the single greatest act of mystification in all of Metz may well lie in his claim, "The film has symbols (motivated signs in this terminology) and not signs (arbitrary signs), it is true, but *it is precisely a characteristic of the semiology of film to allow these symbols to act as signs."* (my italics)[11] Why is it a characteristic? Because Metz must make it so if he is to escape examining his own assumptions. It is flip-flop double-talk that can only be asserted since the attempt at proof would force Metz to face his own theoretical inadequacy and epistemological error.

Metz cannot escape deepening his *cul de sac.* Even the articles with the most helpful distinctions are also designed to buttress his gravest weaknesses. In his useful review of Mitry, for example, Metz fully subscribes to the notion of a "current of signification" or "semantic induction" that is nowhere ("not contained in any of the images") and yet everywhere. Why is it nowhere? Because if it were in the image, then the image would clearly not be the neutral base Metz seeks but contain meaning of its own. (Metz takes an example from a western: "We are shown a stagecoach going through a pass and then a group of Indians high up on the cliff, just watching. The idea of menace and imminent attack, which is not contained in any of the images, is nevertheless clearly communicated to the spectator through what Bela Balázs called the 'current of signification' circulating through the elements of the film, transforming the photographic analagon into a narrative."[12]

The menace of the Indians does not derive from an intangible ether "circulating" through the images or oozing into them from the cuts between; it is *in* them, in the composition and *mise en scène,* for clearly, it is possible to shoot the scene so that we experience the Indians as benign or even protective figures. Failure to recognize this may say a lot about our own stereotyping, or even racism, but says very little indeed about how meaning is communicated in film.

Only by treating his denotative level as matter, material for analysis, and connotation or meaning as energy, as a circulating vaguery, can Metz obscure his sleight of hand. Rather than recognize the moving image strip as information carried by both analog and digital means, Metz must mystify the former in order to reify the latter.

Likewise in "Methodological Propositions for the Analysis of Film,"[13] Metz makes a number of useful distinctions that become powerful tools against the kind of signifier/signified splitting in, for example, Wollen's identification of semantic themes outside style in Ford and Hawks, on the plane of content alone. Nevertheless, Metz's basic proposition is that the signifieds of "social" interest (what some call content) are only found among the filmic signifiers, that they are "recruited" to film. He also concedes that they may exist among the second-level cinematic signifiers —at the connotative level.

While not axiomatically elevated to superior status, the denotative level of the cinematic signifiers is still considered more primary by Metz. Yet their signifieds are purely denotative, yielding narrative signification and conveniently defining a niche for Metz's formalist talents. For example, the signified of the signifiers of alternating montage is "simultaneity."[14] "The human problems" that a film may refer to are only manifest at a connotative level, when this sign, alternating montage, becomes the signifier for a signified which "tells us something about the film-maker's style,"[15] a "something" Metz doesn't pursue. Style remains a separate bag of candy that he can take or leave, and usually leaves.

The essay then becomes at its base another strategy for establishing the primacy of denotation and the linguistic, verbal-language model in the guise of generously proffered methodological clarification. The denotative/connotative distinction would immediately collapse if Metz had his neutral base of analogous images taken away from him. "The form of the denotation is constructed" (or "invented" as Pasolini puts it), but what Metz doesn't say is that there is, therefore, no denotation apart from connotation—that, un-

like the case of verbal language, in film the distinction makes no sense.

In contrast to Metz and his followers, Umberto Eco has taken much of Pasolini's writing quite seriously and has even tried to go him one better in demolishing the myth of mechanical duplication so dear to Metz, Bazin, and Eisenstein.[16] Eco's stress is on codes within the iconic sign, the area Metz quickly glosses over and which Pasolini asserts is subject to style but not coding, at least not coding like that of verbal language. Eco goes so far as to locate ten codes at work in the image, all subverting the simple notion of duplication and the ontological relationship. These range from codes of perception and recognition to strongly cultural codes of iconography and taste. Their exact formulation isn't worked out too fully in the Eco I've read (*La Struttura Assente,* Bompiano, Milano, 1968)[17] but the main contribution seems to lie in his destruction of the assumption about the "mechanical duplication" and transparent meaning of the image in favor of a learned, coded (though conventionalized seems a more apt word to me)[18] system of signification. Eco persuasively demonstrates that semiological tools are indeed relevant to non-linguistic systems of communication: these phenomena may be treated "like a language" (but not verbal language, a point Eco himself doesn't fully perceive).

Equally interesting, Eco introduces the notion of cinematic articulations at the level of the image rather than at the level of narrative. He argues, in effect, that visual perception is governed by a digital code like verbal language. In

his view iconic *figures* (the minimal units of the iconic code involving texture, shading, contrast, lines, etc.—units without significance in themselves, like phonemes) combine to form iconic *signs* (minimal units of recognition—an eye, boot, tree, etc.). These figures and their combination represent the first and second articulations of the cinematic code in a way similar to phonemes and monemes. They can be employed to develop more complex statements. Iconic signs are blended together within a film frame to form *semes*—a complex of many signs comparable to an utterance.[19] Hence the shot is *not* a word; it is at minimum a sentence.

Eco goes one step further in order to demonstrate a third articulation. This time he begins with the iconic signs that were originally formed by figures. He treats this one articulation as both a first and a second articulation, introducing an added economy into the cinematic code. In their capacity as the basic units of the third articulation the signs represent *kinesic figures*. That is, they are basic units of movement without significance in and of themselves. They are discrete but meaningless signs (sectioned from a gestural continuum at the rate of 24 per second): one image (in one frame) of a head does not tell us whether it is moving up and down or from side to side. Kinesic figures join together not in the frame this time but between frames, in the temporal flow of the *motion* picture to form *kinesic signs*. These kinesic signs are multiplied within the frame to form *kinemorphs* or *kinesic semes* —complex utterances made up of a number of movements, or kinesic signs.

In this way the film sections up a continuum —real-life, analog, perceptual experience—into the discrete units of a triply articulated language. This is so much richer than doubly articulated languages that it creates *"l'effet du réel"* and from this illusion is born the metaphysics of cinema.

Eco's work at the level of the image seems to me of great importance. Note that these articulations could all occur within a single take and in no way require montage for their construction. Note that denotation and connotation are simultaneous, that the distinction becomes meaningless and is, in fact, not employed, and, finally, that diachronic progression does not primarily constitute narrative. Eco locates a third articulation here in order to explain the richness of film communication. The richness is certainly there and while the presence of articulations is still in question, Eco's effort once again indicates the incredible impoverishment to which Metz must subject the cinema in order to achieve a "fit" with his ill-conceived model.

What remains at issue, though, is Eco's contention that *all* human communication is digital in nature:

> . . . the most natural phenomena, apparently analogical in their relationships, for example, perception, can be reduced today to digital processes.
>
> The structural skeleton which magically appears in two different things at once is not a problem of analogical resemblance defying analysis; it can be dealt with in terms of binary choices.[20]

I fully agree it doesn't defy analysis, contrary to what Metz's "circulating current" would have us believe, but I must strongly disagree with the notion that the analog can be reduced to the digital (see Wilden's *System and Structure,* pp. 157–161, on the functioning of the human nervous system, for example). And since this is the basis for Eco's triple articulation of the cinematic code, I must also disagree with the notion of articulations in cinema.

Some of the best evidence that processes like perception do not depend on binary choices is mustered in J. J. Gibson's *The Perception of the Visual World.*[21] In an extended discussion of the perception of depth, motion, slant and constancy of shape, Gibson acknowledges the usefulness of long-recognized cues like linear perspective, familiar size, overlap, etc. (which often involve binary choices) but adds another wholly analogical, continuously operative means of determination: depth gradients. Gibson argues that since equidistant points on a surface appear closer together on the retina the more distant they are on the surface, this establishes a gradient describing the density of the texture, which serves as an adequate cue for depth perception. Gradients are characteristic of analogical processes and often supplant codes in the transfer

of information. Depth in a Renaissance painting, for example, may *not* be due to "parallel" lines that converge at a vanishing point. It may be an inevitable side-effect of the algorithms which generate a texture gradient whose longitudinal elements are inversely proportional to the square of the distance.

Bateson pins this down still further in his essay "Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art" when he refers to work done by Adalbert Ames demonstrating that "the conscious 3-D visual images which we make of that which we see, are made by processes involving mathematical premises of perception, of the use of which we are totally unconscious."[22] Bateson goes on to argue that style too is "linked to those levels of the mind where primary process holds sway," that it too operates according to precise algorithms "coded and organized in a manner totally different from the algorithms of language."[23] For Bateson, art is about the species of unconsciousness and their attachment to conscious messages. Verbal discourse about relationship, for example, "is commonly accompanied by a mass of semi-voluntary kinesic and autonomic signals which provide a more trustworthy comment on the verbal message" (than the words themselves, "I love you," for example).[24]

These findings, supported by others and striking in their implications as Bateson's work on schizophrenogenic environments and logical typing in communication indicates, send tremors through Eco's premises. Articulations cannot be created because there are no gaps that are truly noise (always and everywhere nonsense), no signs that are truly arbitrary. Eco's figures may have no intrinsic meaning but neither can they be classified: there can be no alphabet of iconic figures for there is no discrete difference between one shade and another, nor any neutrality: even the non-signifying figures are informed by the style apparent in the larger units—lighting or lens angle, for example. Eco's effort is indeed only a short remove from the madness generated by Zeno's paradoxes: quantitative diminutions of the image can never provide a neutral foundation for signs in the cinema, and it is useful to

recall that Zeno attempted his reduction of the analog to the digital in order to dispute the reality of change and motion![25]

Eco, though, isn't the only one to make the fatal error of inserting binary choices and oppositions where they don't belong. Peter Wollen, in his *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema,* infiltrates via a structuralist bias many of the same errors. Brian Henderson, in his "Critique of Cine-Structuralism, Part I,"[26] correctly spots the asymmetry of Wollen's thrust vis-à-vis his model, Lévi-Strauss, namely the emergence of the subject/author (*auteur*) in Wollen when Lévi-Strauss's work is a ceaseless effort to deny the significance of the subject. Henderson does not take issue with the foundational premise that significance in film is constituted by sets of binary oppositions, however. For Lévi-Strauss, and presumably Wollen and Henderson, binary oppositions, as a timeless category in the structuration of the mind, derive from the universal observation that all verbal languages can be reduced to a relatively small number of oppositions between "distinctive features"—the phonemes.

This however is to fail to recognize a fundamental difference between phonemes (meaningless sounds if taken separately) and mythemes (the "gross constitutive elements" of myths, comparable to the seme in film or styleme in Pasolini's terms). The latter bundle of signs *always* carry significance since they only arise within a context. As an instrumental base, mythemes are *not* neutral. As Wilden argues, "It is an error to treat a context-free system of oppositions between the acoustic characteristics of "bits" of information (distinctive features) as if they were isomorphic with myth, which is a system with a context."[27] Myths aren't neutral combinations; they arise within a material context of human social reality. Wilden concludes, "The myth then ceases to serve the neutral function of organization pure and simple; it serves as the rationalization of a given form of social organization."[28]

Lévi-Strauss's and Wollen's work (and to a lesser degree, Henderson's) are mythopoetic endeavors in their own right, revealing to us not

only knowledge about the structure of myth or film or of the "mind," but also about the structure of ideology. Once again this involves a suppression of the analogical in favor of the digital. Wilden shows how Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the Oedipus myth does this by flattening different types of communication into one level of (phonemic) opposition. It must deny levels and context in order to produce its results, for to do otherwise would raise questions of how these levels are organized and controlled—the power of one part of a system to exploit other parts (the arena of ideology, the context of history). In our society this relates, among other things, to the power of the digital (crucial to exchange value) to exploit the analogical, a phenomenon that casts its massive penumbra over the (ideological) writings of Lévi-Strauss, Wollen, et al. A theory of logical typing in communication, of context, boundaries and their control, is a necessary (but not sufficient) tool for countering exploitation and its ideological rationalizations. Unfortunately, these are tools that Lévi-Strauss's form of structuralism has failed to develop.

Wollen's results are thus highly suspect. He arguest that in Ford there are oppositions between garden/wilderness, ploughshare/saber, nomadic life/domestic life, charismatic/rational-legal authority, etc. Wollen calls the first of these the "master antinomy." Why? Probably because of its importance to Henry Nash Smith —certainly not because he demonstrates its presence in the films. Wollen truncates Lévi-Strauss's method, though, and fails to show the bundles of relations that establish these categories. Wollen simply asserts them and then proceeds to erect an aesthetic valuing Ford over Hawks because of the "richness of the shifting relations between antinomies," making a prescriptive tool of an analytic method rather than seeking to extend it to an explanatory principle.

But Wollen can't explain himself. If he were to derive the oppositions he thinks exist, he would be forced to revert to mise-en-scène, which he himself admits involves graded communications that only adds "noise" to his "semantic" analysis.[29] For example, the shots through doorways or other openings in The Searchers, setting apart those inside and those outside (nomadic vs. settled, for Wollen) clearly involve the perception of depth, a quality communicated by gradients, not codes. But to have recourse to style would be to replace oppositions with gradients, his core category of "semantic meaning" with the peripheral categories (for Wollen) of "stylistic and expressive meaning." He would then lose the instrumental base that Pasolini argues doesn't exist: the arbitrary units comparable to phonemes that Wollen assumes exist but doesn't locate, the grounds for using verbal language as a privileged model in the first place.

Wollen goes so far as to eliminate style entirely from the terrain of significance or of interior meaning in the auteur. Oppositions are discovered by reading the film or text and finding an ex post facto "score," a structure like a composition that didn't pre-exist the film, that was composed into it by the auteur. This score does not, and here's the rub, include uses of style. The auteur does it with his hands tied behind his back: "There is no doubt that the greatest films will be not simply auteur films but marvellous expressively and stylistically as well . . . " (Signs and Meaning, p. 113). Style exists in the pre-text, the script, and is simply transposed to the film by the auteur and the metteur-en-scène alike. What distinguishes the auteur is the supplement of semantic meaning that he scores into the film by a process Wollen never does clarify (perhaps because no one can. As Lévi-Strauss says, the attempt of a myth to resolve a contradiction "is impossible, if, as it happens, the contradiction is real").

Lévi-Strauss's structuralism insists that myths have no author, no origin, no history (no diachronic structure linked inescapably to deep structure) and, for Derrida at least, mythopoetic thought is decentered with no core axis around which parts are substituted in rigid fashion. Instead it allows "free play" limited only by the shifting rules of the game. Myths pass the translation test, retaining their semantic, structural significance "even under the worst translations." These qualifications do not apply to Wollen's approach. Auteur films by definition have an

author and an origin and a diachronic moment that weighs into the meaning (the narrative chain is not simply a string for stylistic pearls; it is integral to the meaning). *Auteur* films can seldom pass a translation test: remakes seldom convey the same meaning (the same oppositions, for Wollen) simply because they lack the same style.

Wollen's effort is like that of thirties cinematographers trying to re-insert new technology (faster films) into an old aesthetic (soft focus, narrow depth of field). He wants his structuralism but he wants his proven method (*auteur* criticism) even more.

But to criticize one unnourishing theory after another is a bit like eating meals of decayed food then spending all our time coping with indigestion. Sometimes it is better to clear the pantry and start afresh. With the goal of expediting understanding and of providing an introduction to an alternative form of cine-textual reading, I have chosen to focus on two films by John Ford, *My Darling Clementine* and *Young Mr. Lincoln*, two films upon which many cine-structuralists have commented.[30] In looking at these two films, there are three points that seem particularly important: the actual form and function of the "oppositions" some critics uncover; the necessity for deriving our understanding of the presence or absence of oppositions, or other meaningful categories, from the style, from the signifier/signified chain as a coupled entity within an ideolect; and the absence in the cine-structuralist texts on these films of a mediation between film and history, film and social process, the most consistent omission in the work of those presently marching in the cine-structuralist parade.

Wollen argues that the barber-shop scene in *My Darling Clementine*[31] marks the transition of Wyatt Earp from "wandering cowboy, nomadic, savage, bent on personal revenge, unmarried to married man, settled, civilized, the sheriff who administers the law."[32] Furthermore, "[Earp's] progress is an uncomplicated passage from nature to culture, from the wilderness left in the past to the garden anticipated in the future."[33] Nothing could be further from the

truth. Wollen's reductionist use of structural oppositions ironically leads him to see the opposite of what actually takes place, a virtual solarization of the cine-text.

My Darling Clementine is shot in a tableau style of relatively static, classically balanced, "frozen," full-face portraits that both point to an epic—a larger-than-life, larger-than-individual-destiny—tale, and to a defiance of time—a tale that doesn't "flow" but asserts itself as full-blown (there are no tracks, pans or zooms except perhaps in Earp's horseback chase after Doc). The prevalence of descriptive syntagms of a tableau-like nature asserts spatial continuity, integrating characters into the same kind of space, but also locks characters in time; it does not present a *narrative* discourse.

Ford is obliged to advance his story but his style already reflects an unwillingness: he is hesitant and perhaps brooding, preferring to reflect on a myth (the populist version of the charismatic hero) rather than tell it (knowing, perhaps, that the telling must mask irresolvable contradictions).[34] Fonda's Earp may thus be Ford's character pretext, another locus for his own vision and the long, dream-like center of the film (all that occurs between the killing and its revenge) may be Ford's and Earp's obsession with escape from doing what must be done, of pursuing the narrative, of taking revenge, of re-establishing the separation of the hero from the masses—a separation that is rampant in *Young Mr. Lincoln*. Tableau framings and low-angle heroic shots are Ford's stylistic ("poetic" in Pasolini's vocabulary) means of expressing his desire to linger, to preserve one element of his myth (the unity of Earp and town) at the expense of its resolution (the impossibility of maintaining that unity through time, through the strain of narrative function).

Earp's response to the death of his kid brother Jamie is a flight from the soil and blood relations to town, interiors, neatly constructed geometric spaces that he takes over. The town becomes a refuge, although the force that killed his brother also menaces the town: the Clantons live on its periphery as Earp had previously. The apparent reluctance to pursue the narrative (murder/re-

venge) then also masks a function the narrative would fulfill: hesitation masks Earp's function of bringing order-from-above; lingering allows Earp to integrate himself with the townspeople (never completely, however). The narrative masks Earp's mythic force (the identity between the interests of the solitary, charismatic hero and those of the common people in a Manichaean struggle against the forces of evil) by masking itself, by becoming the "structuring absence" of his ideological specificity.[35] Finally, however, the show must go on, the wayward actor must be brought back on stage, Earp must face the Clantons and in doing so the dream-like center is revealed as precisely that, a dream—and not the about-face transition Wollen thinks it is.

Town-lingering is a somewhat morbid state for Earp. Going to town is what led to Jamie's death. Staying is punishment as well as flight. Earp assumes the (formerly abandoned) role of sheriff ostensibly to legitimize his revenge, yet *abandons* it when the showdown comes. "It's a family affair." Hence he doesn't fully merge charismatic and rational law, not nearly as much as Ransom Stoddard in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*. Earp is the law where there is no law. He is the ready-made law of the morally strong (strong because of family ties), a law which, like Lincoln's, effects a vital mediation between values that threaten to tear the town asunder. Above all he is a super-family figure who mediates between good and bad blood, between the townsfolk and the Clantons, between culture and nature, law and charisma, town and earth, social roles and blood relations. As such he is banished from fully belonging to either set of terms. His mediation is as a non-possessable, symbolic agent, or sign, in an exchange that, by defining that exchange, operates as a higher logical type.[36] Contrary to Wollen, and, in fact, to Ford's apparent desire, Earp can never be one of the boys, at one with his world; he will always be the solitary mediator who by his (obviously ideologically informed) role must remain apart from that which he brings together.

Revenge restores Earp to his mythic, otherworldly proportions as mediator, guaranteeing the harmony of the town and banishing Earp from its bosom. The film does not advance a

Wyatt Earp in My Darling Clementine

series of either/or oppositions but a mediated continuum with distinct levels of operation.[37] The farewell scene is the fullest single confirmation of this mediating role of Earp and the best single refutation of Wollen's reading.

Earp is at frame left, his horse behind him, standing in the dirt road that runs to the far distant base of a mountain peak. A rail fence stands along the right side of the road, behind the stationary figure of Clementine Carter. Earp bids Clementine farewell; he rises above her (swings into his saddle) and prepares to follow the road leading to a peak above them both. The two figures are not simply in front of the fence. As a two-dimensional representation the image also places the fence *between* them. (The fence here punctuates the continuum culture/nature, but Earp will move above and beyond it.) The figures stand on common ground but only one will move along it. Clementine is now rooted to the soil (not isolated from it in the town's geometry) while Earp is clearly above it. Earp, though, doesn't exactly straddle two worlds; he exists apart from and above each. Charisma and the law remain apart but through his intervention, the space between them can be mediated.

A similar pattern operates in even more detail

in *Young Mr. Lincoln*. [38] The film presents Lincoln as a totally ideological (mythical) figure whose function is to represent the State, the Nation-Family, as the machine which secures the best interests of the people rather than as the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie—although it is this latter function which the film ultimately exposes. To underscore his mythic proportions, and mediating role, Ford's film breaks with Lamar Trotti's script in stressing Lincoln's apartness, his lack of close comrades (only a marginal sidekick is offered), the sense of his being above, beyond, or outside emotions and social relations. He is distantiated, usually by visual means, from (1) crowds, (2) the dance —where his awkward movement in the opposite direction is conspicuous, (3) the celebration parade, (4) the law (to be explained below), (5) friendship, (6) love (sexual, male-female love), (7) God (in that he will use Divine injunctions to a higher end—the Family), (8) politics, as the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma* demonstrate nicely in their article, (9) choice (refusing to choose up until he nearly forces Mrs. Clay to choose, a crucial moment), (10) color (he wears black throughout) and (11) the flesh (he is the visual manifestation of an absence, a unifying concept or function).

Lincoln is clearly not on the same level as the characters and events surrounding him. It is precisely this difference which signifies his mediating role between what might otherwise be irresolvable conflicts. He introduces a complexity into the film which the flattened analysis of *Cahiers'* editors cannot grasp, for there are present here levels, contexts, and boundaries which cannot be rolled out into a piecrust set of interactions, "Law/Woman/Nature," particularly, which *Cahiers* claims "will be articulated according to a system of complementarity and substitution-replacement."[39] *Cahiers'* errors can be linked to absolutely fundamental theoretical errors, namely the subscription to a structural linguistic model of arbitrary signs that can generate identities and oppositions (*"articulated* according to a system . . . "), the absence of a theory of logical typing in communication, and the absence of a theory of mediations within historical process. (Ironically, the incredible weakness and superficiality of their analysis of the film's historical context (sections 2-5) has not even been commented upon by presumably Marxist-oriented theorists like Brian Henderson!) In fact, examining *Cahiers'* methodology in terms of its antecedents and influences (as Henderson does) only repeats the error they make in their textual reading. The key to *Young Mr. Lincoln* lies in close visual-stylistic analysis of its distinct ideolect and the key to *Cahiers'* errors lies in the actual, particular results their reading generates.

Lincoln assumes a dual role, as Oudart notes, a duality that removes him from encounter but which also makes of his task an impossibility. Lincoln represents brotherhood, equality, unity, both-and relationships, even at the expense of subverting the law. For example, he equates a civil offense (debt) with a criminal one (assault and battery) in the case of two farmers. He also implores Mrs. Clay not to honor her Biblical and legal oath to "tell the whole truth" at the trial. In fact, one could argue that Lincoln never has anything to do with the law (it is always a pretext). From start to finish he transforms it in the name of the Family. Lincoln comes to assume the role of the Mother[40] but as an agent for the inscription of the Mother's values, Lincoln adopts the pretext of the Father (the law, inequality, primogeniture, either-or relationships, choice, repression, and prohibition). He accepts Blackstone (the law book) from the father-dominated family, in a matrix of debt and exchange, for example.[41] Lincoln walks into the foreground holding his first law book; the father is visually isolated from the rest of the family while the mother remains inside the wagon, behind and also *above* Lincoln and his law book. Her "gift" to Lincoln is yet to come.

Lincoln's subversion of the law, indicating his pretextual relationship to it, begins immediately. His verbalized study of Blackstone turns "the right to" (a social prerogative) into "right" (a moral good). Violations of "rights" become wrongs. Law becomes morality. Wrongs or evils become negations, denials or violations of rights —moral, sexual, and legal "rights." Already, *before* he meets Ann Rutledge by the river he has transformed the law into his own system, one

which reinforces his castrating/castrated inter-action, and which refutes *Cahiers'* claim that "Ann Rutledge's death must be read as the real origin both of his castration and of his identifica-tion with the law."[42] There is no identification with the law and visual style suggests an unex-plained, antecedent origin to his castration: a reaction shot of Lincoln as he talks to the still living Ann Rutledge by the river captures him from a low angle that conveys the impression of a stern, menacing, even castrating figure which totally belies his gentlemanly words. (Of course, if we attach primary significance to words. . . .) The shot is strikingly reminiscent of the first shot of Scar by the family grave in *The Searchers,* and *Cahiers* does notice a later shot of Lincoln during the quarrel between the farmers with this same threatening aspect. They comment that Lincoln has "an empty, icy, terrifying stare (that manifests Lincoln's) castrating power."[43]

Lincoln thus confounds the law's claim to total sovereignty and instead acts as the agent of a higher law, what *Cahiers* calls "Ideal Law" but which is so radically different from Blackstone's law that a better term for it might be "The Family." We can perhaps indicate some idea of the mediation Lincoln strives to effect in the name of the Family, the Mother above all, through the agency of the Father (Lincoln as phallus) by comparing Blackstone's law to the almanac—a book given in exchange for a debt by the father-dominated family to a book offered freely as a gift by the mother-centered family:

BLACKSTONE	ALMANAC
exchange, debt, recipro-city, roles, tit-for-tat, an enclosed either-or context linked to the father in one system, capitalism in another, and the digital in yet another.	gratuitousness, gifts, of-ferings, mutuality, kinship, harmony, in an open, both - and context ap-proaching magic and cha-risma in one system, tri-balism in another, and the analog in yet another.

Cahiers fails to see the radical distinction being made here (collapsing it into "law" and "truth") and Lincoln's profoundly ideological act of at-tempting to legitimize the former (Blackstone) in the name of the latter (Almanac). The family Lincoln represents, and which so preoccupies

Ford throughout his career, is on one plane the mythical, super-family of rural populism: its "Ideal Law" is clearly not a higher, more ideal, more moral species of law but a fundamentally different order of social unity than that consti-tuted by those real conditions underpinning law.

Lincoln by adopting the role of the father and the relations of the mother acts as a necessary mediation, doing for the family what the family cannot do for itself, thereby grounding the State in the Family. The nation becomes, through Lin-coln, "above" politics and law and achieves a mythic unity. The identity "Law/Woman/Na-ture," though, flies apart. These and other terms have a mediated relationship and Lincoln, in the name of the Family, is the agent of their media-tion.

The early scene of Lincoln on the river bank correlates nicely with this mediating pattern. When he is walking with Ann Rutledge they walk from right to left while the river behind them flows in the same direction. When the film dissolves to her grave, though, the river is flowing in the opposite direction, from left to right! This, however, is the same direction in which Lincoln also moves as he rides his mule into Springfield. It is the signifier of his mediation between earth and town, family and the social matrix. And finally at film's end Lincoln follows a country road into the distance, somewhat to the right but moving predominantly in a receding, upward direction (akin to the path awaiting Earp). Many of the shots of Lincoln throughout the film reinforce this upward motion by their low-angle placement and compositional isolation of Lincoln. (A notable exception is the high-angle shot at the Clay cabin when he realizes the mother is right not to choose between her sons.) The *mise-en-scène* of these shots taken together suggests some definite tensions: nature and woman "flowing" one way, town and law leading another, Abe walking to the left with Ann but Abe rising and backing off to the right when he "chooses" law (as the twig falls across her grave). Similarly, the visual composition locates Lincoln within these tensions and yet sets him apart. The water may flow in opposite directions but what we have at work here is surely more than a simple set of oppositions (or substitution-

replacements).

Lincoln's mediation also forces the film to crack open revealing the ideological function of his role. For example, Lincoln's seemingly benevolent representation of the Law actually originates in a terrible, castrated, castrating operation which produces Law "as a pure prohibition of violence whose result is only a permanent indictment of the castrating effects of its discourse,"[44] and which effectively restrains him from a full self-realization of the qualities he mediates (he is wholly other). Lincoln himself cannot be "had," possessed, known. He frames the context. He doesn't belong to it just as a class cannot be a member of itself. If we relate to him on the basis of the pretext—law, etc.—then we accept the either/or world of choice, repression, fundamental disjunction. If we relate to him as Abe-the-Mother—almanac, gift, etc.—then he effects an auto-repression ("castrated") in which he renounces the desire that would lead to relation. (Mary Todd, e.g., is compelled to withdraw from the balcony by Lincoln's own withdrawal.) The mythic level of his operation banishes him from the realm of real conditions and real relations (exploitation) and openly situates him at the level of ideology. His power is like that of the mother in Bateson's Paradigm: he frames and thereby controls encounters. *Cahiers,* unlike other commentators, realize that this occurs but cannot explain it in terms of the dynamics of communications, leading them to falsely claim the psychodynamics of his function as the controlling mechanism.

Obviously, this critique doesn't overthrow the entirety of *Cahiers'* analysis, the value of which over the now standardized forms of cultural commentary is well summarized by Brian Henderson elsewhere.[45] But their inability to deal with logical typing in communication—with how the context is defined and controlled and how this relates to patterns of social control, and the inability to apply mediation theory as an instrument of historical placement for cultural processes remain fundamental problems.[46] Neither can be overcome easily. Both problems point to the need for the application of extensive knowledge from other fields to film study—a delicate

synthesis of the kind of communication theory developed by Wilden and Bateson, of the mediation theory of Sartre, Lukacs, and Marx, and the kind of visual analysis done by the best of the *auteur* critics, without their aesthetics: there is no place here for the reverence of wholeness, harmony and radiance, for the criteria of complexity and subtlety (V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film,* p. 118) as our most relevant measuring rods. The concepts of logical typing, context, system, structure, and history need to be used to ask questions such as who exploits whom, what parts of a message circuit control (or mediate between) other parts, how do frames generate paradox and who profits/suffers from it. Taking up the formal skills that *auteur* critics have already taught us, we must assimilate these other concepts so that we might advance toward a Marxist film theory (and practice) without becoming trapped in the hopeless oscillation of either/or opposition to neoromantic *auteurists* and pseudo-Marxist semio-structuralists.

Much remains to be done. The two lynchpins of style and narrative still require careful integration under the sign of an adequate theoretical model. Eco's specific example of the integration of the "iconic code" with the "code of narrative function" in the photographic enlargement sequence in *Blow-Up* demonstrates quite convincingly that the meaning we extract resides *between* these codes. (He concludes his analysis by stating, "The context acts as an ideolect assigning determinate values from the codes to signals that might otherwise seem pure noise," *La Struttura Assente,* p. 152.)

Unfortunately, most of the work being done in narrativity—by Metz and Greimas particularly—again falls under the sway of the structural-linguistic model I have been critiquing. The consequences of this for film criticism are most apparent in the work of Alan Williams who has applied Greimas to film. He claims, for example, that "meaning grows organically as part of the narrative structure,"[47] while "the object (of value, we might add) of the semiotic endeavor is not explanation, of course, but description."[48] "Of course," like Metz's claim that

the semiology of cinema can treat its symbols as signs, is far from a simple endorsement of universal truth. Its function is ideological, entirely, and the arid schematism of his articles in *Film Quarterly*[49] testifies to the absence of meaningfullness from work strangulating its own potential with coils of romantic and empirical rationalization. Worse yet, this form of narrative analysis offers very little opening to mediation theory and historical placement. In discussing *Metropolis,* Williams's essay is neatly truncated into narrative analysis and cultural placement. The phenomena of Hitler, Nazism, Weimar Germany, German Expressionism, even the words "German" and "Germany" do not appear at all or only in passing. Williams staples one ideological product to several ideological schemata ("human/mechanical" or "Christian/mystical-alchemical"), but as a materialist analysis of context, that is like starting out with both feet firmly planted in the air.

The problem of developing a thorough understanding of style and narrative in film remains, for me, part of a yet larger problem of understanding the function of art itself. To this broader problem, Gregory Bateson proposes an orientation that seems immediately relevant to an understanding of film (especially if we regard "grace" as a social category unattainable within an exploitative context, e.g., capitalism):

I argue that art is a part of man's quest for grace; sometimes his ecstasy in partial success, sometimes his rage and agony at failure. . . . I shall argue that the problem of grace is fundamentally one of integration and that what is to be integrated is the diverse parts of the mind—especially those multiple levels of which one extreme is called "consciousness" and the other "the unconscious." For the attainment of grace, the reasons of the heart must be integrated with the reasons of the reason.   *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* p. 129.

These divergent forms of reason correspond to primary and secondary process, to the structures of the ego and id, to the Symbolic and Imaginary realms (in Lacan) and their integration to the goals of Marxism and feminism, not to mention some psychotherapy. (And other approaches as well although many such pathways—religion, drugs, etc.—ignore our proviso about grace as a social category.) Integration, or grace, or revolution seems impossible as long as we retain an epistemology that says "you" and "I" exist independent of the space between us—the dynamics of our interaction—and that further defines "I" principally by the ego, and, perhaps as a consequence of all this, elevates the core of the ego's secondary process, the model of verbal language, into a privileged position for *all* communication.

We need to circle back to Bateson's Paradigm —his description of a schizophrenogenic situation. In his analysis of that encounter the mother's graded, analog communication is fully recognized and inscribed within the context of a dominant/submissive, power relationship. The *full* meaning of her analog communication cannot be understood without referring to this context, a frame that establishes boundaries between logical types and within which paradoxical injunctions are rapidly generated (a precondition for schizophrenia—a "dis-ease" of people who cannot tell what kind of message a message, particularly a framing message, is). Within the frame the spoken and nonverbal communications do not form oppositions of a structural-linguistic type; rather they generate a set of paradoxical injunctions as messages-in-circuit: the paradoxes aren't in the words or the gestures, nor are they in the mother or the son. They are *between* all these relata; they are *in* the relationship, in the message plus environment, or context. (Bateson summarizes the son's perception of the paradoxical injunction that is generated as, "If I am to keep my tie to mother, I must not show her that I love her, but if I do not show that I love her, then I will lose her." *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* p. 218.)

Bateson's analysis also shows the son how to escape the double bind by saying, " 'Mother, it is obvious that you become uncomfortable when I put my arm around you, and that you have difficulty accepting a gesture of affection from me.' " (*Ibid.,* p. 217.) Bateson stresses the importance of the frame and who draws it: the mother's spoken comment, "Don't you love me anymore?" takes the place of her bodily stiffening when the son puts his arm around her shoulders (by denying it in favor of treating her

son's withdrawal as an initiatory signal rather than a response).

Confusion of logical types can lead to pathological communication (schizophrenia) but it is also integral to creativity—perhaps most obviously in humor, where a condensation of logical types occurs. Paradox is an inevitable result of establishing boundaries and cannot be wiped away without wiping away culture; it can only be transcended by moving to a higher logical type or accepted when it does not lead to pathology (e.g., through humor or the therapeutic double bind of the therapist that Bateson discusses). The model Bateson's Paradigm offers of metaphorical communication, of potentially therapeutic meta-communication, of logical levels of exchange that establish frames and context and create paradox, seems a more adequate model for understanding the dynamics of human interaction than a set of structural oppositions, synchronically arranged all on the same level. The importance of temporal sequence, or narrative in the broad sense, as a contributor to context, the creation of paradoxical injunctions by the manipulation of the framing, the question of who does the framing (where do we draw the line, who draws it and who profits from it—whites, men, culture?) are all crucial questions that pass straight through the leaky sieve of most film theorists' methodology. And of the contexts or frames within which film itself operates, ideology and history seem the most crucial. It is the urgent need to analyze these contexts that proposes the greatest challenge and the most promising direction for film theory and its critical application.

NOTES

1. More on this distinction can be found in Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure* (London, Tavistock, 1972), ch. 7, and in Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, Ballantine, 1972).
1. Among the materials I have referred to, the books by Wilden and Bateson are most helpful in clarifying this distinction.
2. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* p. 217.

3. Revealing one's own tools of production and stating what kind of intellectual product is in the making are not dishonorable aims; when coupled to an analysis itself radical, it is a necessary step toward a truly Marxist film theory. When used to mask the total inscription of an analysis within the ideology it ostensibly opposes, such declarations only become one more level of mystification.
4. Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," *Cahiers du Cinéma in English,* #6, pp. 35–43.
5. See his "Articulations of the Cinematic Code," *Cinemantics* (London), No. 1, January 1970; an overlapping selection is "Semiologie des messages visuels," *Communications* (Paris), No. 15, 1970.
6. One of Eco's errors lies here, as we'll see, in so far as he takes the referent to be the real world where he argues there is no analog to the outline presented by a visual image. He's right about the characteristics of the real world but wrong about the referent. It is the *visual field* of human perception where analogous outlines most certainly do exist. Our contact with a distal object is always mediated by a proximal stimulus.
7. Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," p. 36.
8. Those of genre, movement, or film wave, and narrative are perhaps the most crucial.
9. By "cinematic" I am referring to Metz's distinction between cinematic and filmic codes, the former being unique to cinema (codes of montage), the latter being more widespread and recruited to film (codes of lighting or of dress).
10. The Metz texts to which I will be referring are early texts. Metz himself has altered many of his earlier positions; rightly, though, he has not destroyed these texts. They continue to exist and continue to challenge our own thinking. I get little sense that Metz would endorse the basic thrust of my argument.
11. Christian Metz, "Current Problems of Film Theory," *Screen,* Vol. 14, No. 1/2, p. 75.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 44.
13. Christian Metz, "Methodological Propositions for the Analysis of Flm," *Screen,* Vol. 14, No. 1/2, pp. 89–101.
14. The use of the word "levels" here may be confusing since it is not meant in the same sense as when discussing logical typing in communication and the existence of more than one level in the exchange of information. Levels in Metz are arbitrary categories of the analyst, having no relation to frames, context, and paradox.
15. Metz, "Methodological Propositions," p. 97.
16. In this context, Bazin and Eisenstein aren't so far apart. Both agree on the transparency of the image to reality: Bazin chooses to valorize this imprint effect

rather than "faith in the image" in order to cele-
brate reality (ideology), while Eisenstein chooses to
valorize style in order to fulfill a socialist calling to
transform reality.

17. Fragments of Eco's book have been translated into
English in *Cinemantics* #1, London (January, 1970),
"Articulations of the Cinematic Code," and an over-
lapping selection appears in French in *Communications*
#15 (Paris, 1970), "Semiologie des Messages Visuels."

18. As Eco himself says, "Undoubtedly the iconic codes
are weaker, more transitory, limited to restricted groups
or to the choices of a single person (which is Pasolini's
argument) in as much as they are not strong codes like
those of verbal language; and in them the optional
variants prevail over the truly pertinent features." *Cine-
mantics* #1, p. 6.

19. "Semes should therefore be considered—with re-
spect to the signs permitting identification—as an
ideolect." *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. James Jerome Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual
World,* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1950).

22. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* p. 135.

23. *Ibid.,* p. 139.

24. *Ibid.,* p. 137.

25. Zeno was among the first but far from the last to
attempt this reduction, a reduction with massive impli-
cations under capitalist ideology, which depends for its
survival upon the kinds of boundaries and the "integ-
rity" of the units it carves from the analog: "The temp-
tation to treat static ideas as absolute rather than as
partial and provisional, proved irresistible to many
western thinkers; the apparent clarity of such ideas
seduces the mind into dismissing change or transforma-
tion as a trivial secondary effect of interactions between
the "real" entities. Static concepts proved to be very
effective intellectual tranquilizers." (Lancelot Law
Whyte, *The Unconscious Before Freud* (Garden City,
Anchor Books, 1962, p. 42.)

26. Henderson, *Film Quarterly,* Vol. 27, #1, p. 25.

27. Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure,* p. 8.

28. *Ibid.,* p. 10.

29. Wollen writes, "We need to develop much further a
theory of performance [vs. composition, for Wollen],
of the stylistic, of graded rather than coded modes of
communication." (p. 113–115). The semantics he does
advance here are somewhat befuddling and Wilden's
comment on some of the sources for it seems apt:
"[Structuralism, structural linguistics and information
science] are all anti-semantic in that they substitute the
supposed characteristics of a theoretically neutral *in-
strument of analysis* (the "bit") for the *use* to which
it is put, as an *instrument of communication,* at given

levels in a given goal seeking system, where no informa-
tion is ever neutral. Meaning—the goal—becomes
bounded not by the structure of the context in which it
occurs, but by the structure of 'science.' As a result the
methodology implicitly becomes an ontology." Wilden,
System and Structure, p. 11. And, of course, it remains
thoroughly ideological.

30. Wollen discusses *My Darling Clementine* in *Signs
and Meaning in the Cinema. Young Mr. Lincoln* is the
subject of an extended essay by the editors of *Cahiers
du Cinéma,* translated in *Screen,* Vol. 13, #3 where
Wollen also comments on this text, and additional com-
mentaries on *Cahiers'* analysis can be found in *Screen,*
Vol. 14, #3, (Ben Brewster, "Notes on the text *Young
Mr. Lincoln* by the Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*")
and in Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism, Part
II," *Film Quarterly,* Vol. 27, #2.

31. Plot synopsis: Wyatt Earp (Fonda) becomes Mar-
shal of Tombstone after his youngest brother, Jamie, is
killed by the Clanton gang. He establishes a delicate
camaraderie with Doc Holliday (Victor Mature), his
woman Chihuahua, and the townspeople. Earp courts
Clementine Carter who comes west in pursuit of Doc
only to be rejected by him. Finally, gaining positive
proof of the Clantons' crime (at the expense of Chi-
huahua's life) Earp resigns and wages the battle of OK
Corral. Afterwards, he leaves town, alone, pausing to
bid farewell to Clementine.

32. Wollen, *Signs and Meaning,* p. 96.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Ford's film appeared in the midst of the *film noir*
style (1946) although there are clearly pockets of
transcendence here that pure-bred *noir* would snuff out
—the desert and its monuments, the daytime scenes, the
pureness of Clementine, etc. The brooding quality, in
fact, bears closer relation to Ford's earlier German
Expressionist-tempered films (*The Informer,* 1935; *The
Long Voyage Home,* 1940) while the undertone of re-
luctance, of lingering, is perhaps related to the cracks
in his vision that Ford cannot repair, cracks that clearly
inform *Young Mr. Lincoln* and that reveal the alterna-
tion a myth undergoes through its mediated relationship
to changing social conditions. We don't need to wait
until the bald dissillusionment of *Cheyenne Autumn*
(1964) to find Ford hesitant and, to a degree, unable
to repeat an outmoded myth; nor do we need to wait for
the effect of World War II as some historians argue
(both *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *The Grapes of Wrath*
predate the war). The same kind of transformation
occurs in Hawk's trilogy *Rio Bravo, El Dorado,* and
Rio Lobo, but it is so intimately rooted in stylistic
nuance that the structural tools of Peter Wollen miss
it altogether. (For an excellent analysis of Hawks's

shifting attitudes to similar material in these films see Greg Ford's "Mostly on Rio Lobo," *Film Heritage,* Vol. 7, # 1.)

35. By contrast a film like *Shane* flaunts the hero's otherness and traces a clear-cut narrative line. It is a far more unabashedly reactionary film.

36. A brief account of the theory of logical types and its application to communication theory can be found in Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* notably in the essay, "The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication." Applications occur throughout his work and Wilden's book as well.

37. Recognizing this mediation can radically alter our perception of the film. A similar alteration can occur in other seemingly oppositional categories that in fact function within a determining context. Thus Juliet Mitchell examines oppositional assumptions about bisexuality, or more properly, homo- and heterosexuality, and concludes that bisexuality is not a simple concept of "infantile unisex" but depends heavily upon psychology: "It is this dilemma, in which the subject is still resolving the precise point of the place he occupies in the world, in terms of his (and her) wish for it not to be the feminine place, which is the only, and ever-present alternative to where anyone really wants to be—in the male position within the patriarchal human order." Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism,* p. 65.

38. Plot synopsis: Abe Lincoln campaigns in backwoods Illinois. He meets the Clay family and receives a lawbook in exchange for supplies. Lincoln studies the law and courts Ann Rutledge. When she dies Lincoln decides to go to Springfield to practice law. A deputy is murdered and Lincoln defends the accused: Mrs. Clay's two sons. Lincoln finally demonstrates their innocence, exposes the guilty man and earns the respect of the citizens and his more sophisticated opponent, Douglass.

39. Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma* collective text, "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln,*" *Screen,* Vol. 13, #3, p. 21.

40. This is a crucial development which requires a learning process which culminates in his visit to the Clay's country cabin. Lincoln "adopts" the family and assumes the roles of Father and Mother. But which one will dominate? He asks the mother to choose, as Felder the lawyer will do, to tell which son is guilty. But he then backs down in the face of her resistance, recognizing that he has gone too far. He accedes to the mother's silence, her higher sense of unity and henceforth becomes the active agent of its mediation with town, law, justice, etc. When the mother dominates, after Lincoln has relented in his interrogation, he receives the Almanac.

41. *Cahiers* omit a crucial distinction through their reductive oppositions. They claim that "it is from the same family that Law and Truth originate: through the book (the carrier of the law) and the almanac." (p. 32.) Wrong. There is a key difference. The law is given by the father; the almanac by the mother. They are presented in markedly different contexts and represent wholly different values.

42. "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln,*" *Screen,* Vol. 13, #3, p. 30.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.,* p. 43.

45. Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism, Part II," *Film Quarterly,* Vol. 27, #2.

46. Perhaps there is an added impediment rooted in the very texture of mediation theory. Compared to the hard edged, schematic, so-called scientific array of structural vertebrae (oppositions, identities, condensations, displacements, etc.) mediations may seem "soft," slippery, elusive like experiential reality itself. We need not consider it a transcendent mysticism however. Mediation theory can offer a model that is an approximation of the "immanent mind" that eludes static concepts, discrete units: "the elementary cybernetic system with its messages in circuit is, in fact, the simplest unit of mind; and the transform of a difference traveling in a circuit is the elementary idea." (Bateson, p. 459.) " . . . It means, you see, that I now localize something which I am calling 'Mind' immanent in the large biological system—the ecosystem." p. 460. The rigid structural backbone that some would propose for film quickly turns to jelly when we realize that it only exists at all as a result of the axioms of incorrect epistemology. Where, for example, do we "put" the space between us and the screen? A question crucial to Godard, it is answered by some structural linguistics by assuming a "reader inscribed in the text," another process of flattening, a racist, elitist process in some cases at that, while Oudart's extension of some Lacanian notions to posit an "absent-one" (the visual field of he who sees what appears on the screen—a field we sometimes have exposed to us in reverse shots) correlates interestingly with the ambiguous role of shifters in language and of the sub-film in Pasolini: the absent-one can be used stylistically to convey a meaning that remains integrally dependent on *context,* on the ideolect as in Hitchcock's treatment of suspense most notably. (I am indebted to Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of the Classical Cinema," *FQ,* Vol. 28, No. 1, for my understanding of the absent-one.)

47. Alan Williams, "Only Angels Have Wings," (unpublished paper).

48. Alan Williams, "Structures of Narrativity in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4, p. 20.

49. See note 47, and also "Circles of Desire: Narrative and Repetition in *La Ronde, FQ*, Vol. 27, #1.

Reviews

THE GAMBLER

Director: Karel Reisz. Producers: Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff. Photography: Victor J. Kemper. Script: James Toback. Music: Jerry Fielding. Paramount.

Axel Freed of *The Gambler* lives in two worlds which seem to have nothing in common: the college classroom where he teaches English and the gambling tables where he plays dangerous games of chance. Basically indifferent to the thousands of dollars which he throws away, he bears little resemblance to the Amarillo Slim of *California Split*, a cool businessman who flashes a horse-choking wad of C notes, or to that movie's two lightweight heroes. Axel's goals are more intangible—and more complex than many have realized. In probing them, *The Gambler* is often schematic, often fuzzy; yet it is a commanding movie, far more interesting, far more involving than Robert Altman's weak mishmash.

This may seem like a paradox. Heavily improvised movies like *California Split* are supposedly free and open, creating worlds and

James Caan in THE GAMBLER

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Notes

[26] **Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)**
Brian Henderson
Film Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1. (Autumn, 1973), pp. 25-34.
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[30] **Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)**
Brian Henderson
Film Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1. (Autumn, 1973), pp. 25-34.
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[45] **Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)**
Brian Henderson
Film Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 1. (Autumn, 1973), pp. 25-34.
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[46] **The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema**
Daniel Dayan
Film Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 1. (Autumn, 1974), pp. 22-31.
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0015-1386%28197423%2928%3A1%3C22%3ATTOCC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S

NOTE: *The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.*

[48] **Structures of Narrativity in Fritz Lang's "Metropolis"**
Alan Williams
Film Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 4. (Summer, 1974), pp. 17-24.
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0015-1386%28197422%2927%3A4%3C17%3ASONIFL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8